

Sunday, March 29, 2015

Dear Representative,

Congratulations on your child's upcoming high school graduation! You must be so proud of your child. Your child worked very hard in school so that they can be successful and now they are moving forward to the next phase of their adult life. All the hard work paid off! I bet you and your child are looking forward to furthering their education, working and being active members in their community. How exciting!! Unfortunately, everything you and your child worked for is not going to happen. Their dreams and goals are being taken away from them. Oh and by the way, how did I learn about this? I read about it on Facebook!

That is what I am currently dealing with right now for my child with and Intellectual Disability (I.D.). You can't imagine the shock when my husband and I came across a letter on the Facebook page of The Connecticut Family Support Network, "DDS Grad Funding is in Jeopardy!". Anger, fear, resentment, disappointment.....speechless. It is also very upsetting to learn about the Governor's proposed budget on Facebook and not even be notified by DDS. A major disappointment!

My husband and I have two children, one with an I.D. and one without. They are both treated with upmost respect and above all, they are treated equal. Both children are graduating from high school this year. Our son without I.D. has worked very hard to do well in school with the goal to graduate, go to college and become an active member of the work force. Do you think it would be right to "surprise" him and tell him that all his hard work was for nothing? That all his efforts were for nothing? The hard working teachers and administrators gave him the best education possible for no reason or purpose? That is exactly what you are telling me is going to happen to our daughter that has special needs. Two children in same family, both graduating from high school. Our son without I.D. will have the opportunity to achieve his goals, but our daughter with I.D. won't have that equal opportunity.

Families will now have to stay home all day to care for their child. The only other option they have is to come up with approximately \$40,000 per year so that they can have someone care for their child. Most families will have to quit their job and will therefore lose their insurance.

Families of individuals with special needs will be in major financial debt. Not only will they have lost significant family income as well as health insurance, but also increased stress both physically and financially. Families will then have to apply for state assistance including food stamps, heat assistance, health care, etc. to compensate for the loss of having to quit their job because of the state's mandate to dispense with services for these individuals.

The proposed budget is nothing but pure discrimination towards individuals with I.D. As a parent, Occupational Therapist that has worked with individuals with I.D. and a Special Olympics coach, I am not

only angry, I am greatly concerned. Whether individuals have special needs or not, they are contributing members of society, human beings that should be treated with respect.

From a state financial aspect, how will this save Connecticut money? The loss of tax revenue the state will have to forego by these working parents doesn't make sense. Please explain your reasoning here and how morally wrong this concept is to our Connecticut families.

We plead with you to restore graduate funding into the DDS budget. We are looking forward to your prompt response. Please feel free to contact us via email or phone at 860-450-6558.

Sincerely,

Randy and Karen LeBeau (parent's of Ashley LeBeau)  
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